was initially admitted in Central Jail No. 2 on 18th January, 1995 as a detenue under Public Safety Act and later shifted to Jail No. 1 from where he was released on 17th January, 1997. Both these prisoners were, therefore, lodged in different jails.

(d) The steps taken by the Government to reduce overcrowding in jail include construction of new jails in the campus of Central Jail, Tihar and in other areas of Delhi; holding of Special Courts to try cases of under trials who confess their involvement in petty offences; and release of prisoners on personal bonds/relaxed surety conditions.

Leave sought by LCA Project Director

*150. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Project Director of the Light Combat Aircraft has expressed desire to leave the project; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES):(a) and (b) The Programme Director of Light Combat Aircraft has submitted his request for sanction of sabbatical leave to pursue academic/research work.

Decline in Export of Synthetic Textiles and Rayon

*152. SHRI P.N. SIVA: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the exports of Indian synthetic textiles and rayon have declined by about 5 per cent during the period April 1 to September 30, of this fiscal year;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the industry claims that the "Stoppage of brand rate drawback" has contributed to the decline in synthetic textiles exports;

(d) if so, the role of this duty drawback in enhancing our synthetic textile exports; and

(e) the steps taken/being taken by Government to tackle the situation?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It was mainly due to general showdown in the economies of some of India's major trading partners like the US and increased competition from countries like Indonesia, Taiwan, Korea, etc.

(c) to (e) The duty drawback is a facility available to all exports including synthetic textile exports to offset the incidence of duty suffered on the inputs of export products. The exporters generally take into account the drawback rates/concessions while pricing their goods for export market. As per current scheme, the duty refund can be claimed by exporters either through All Industry Rates of Drawback or through Brand Rate mechanism.

Procurement of Defence Items

*154. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have lifted the ban on middlemen in defence sector;

(b) if so, whether despite this the response of middlemen is very poor as reported in the Hindustan Times dated the 18th February, 2002;

(c) if so, whether the Defence Ministry is facing problems of acquiring various items due to poor response of middlemen; and

(d) if so, the strategy to be adopted by Government to procure various items with or without help of middlemen?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) A comprehensive formulation of the role, if any, which authorised Representatives/Agents/or Sales Consultants employed by foreign suppliers for the promotion of their production may legitmately be expected to play, has been receiving the attention of Government for some time. The entire policy has been extensively reviewed recently with the objective of defining the scope, extent and